

leaving the holes. Thus we concluded that a family was using the lair.

We located fresh pugmarks of a wolf moving rapidly and followed the tracks around several *Prosopis* bushes into a small clearing. Here there were marks of a scuffle, in which the wolf's paw marks were intermixed with the hoofprints of a chinkara. There was very little blood and no evidence of the kill being eaten on the spot. The wolf, after making the kill, had dragged it off over several sand dunes and dry watercourses for about a kilometer in more or less a straight line. On either side of the pugmarks was a single line of hoof marks, indicating that the wolf was strong enough to lift its prey and carry it with 2 of its legs off the ground. We came across the dismembered head of an adult male chinkara. Only the skull & horns were left. The dragmarks continued over another 100 m towards a raised area on the bank of a river bed. Here the wolf was apparently joined by several others, as indicated by tracks converging from different directions. The hooves, legbones, and parts of the skin and tail of the chinkara were all that was left. Every scrap of meat had been cleaned off the bones.

Another interesting feature we came across was that there were the remains of at least 5 or 6 (probably more) old kills in the area. The wolves seemed to have used the raised river bank frequently as an eating area. The other kills were remains of a male chinkara, several females or young male chinkara, and a peacock. Wolf faeces found in the area also contained what appeared to be hair of hare.

A most unusual find, not far from the eating place, was a small hole dug in the bed of the dry river. There were

wolf tracks all around it. At the bottom of the hole (which was not as large as the lair burrows seen earlier), there was a little water. The guard informed us that the wolves dug such holes to get water from the river bed. I cannot recall a reference to any animal apart from elephants digging for water in dry river beds. The Forest Department personnel who were with us have promised to look into this, to confirm if these are actually dug for water, or for some other purpose.

The wolves at Guda feed more frequently on the chinkaras. Adult Blackbuck are probably more difficult to bring down. However, since wolves in other areas are known to predate upon fawns of Blackbuck, one cannot exclude this possibility at Guda. We found no remains of Blackbuck during this brief visit.

The present population of wolves does not seem to adversely affect the number of prey animals. Chinkara and Blackbuck abound in the area, and are as plentiful as in areas where there are no wolves.

The wolves at Guda prefer the heavily overgrown *Prosopis* bush country to the more open areas. This gives them adequate cover and an opportunity to dig lairs in the sand dunes.

The sandy soil in the area makes tracking an easy task, but the heavy bush cover decreases visibility. In all probability the wolves had spotted us and either moved off, or holed up, before we could see them again.

ERACH BHARUCHA  
KIRAN ASHER  
RAJEEV JUGTAWA

July 3, 1987.

## 6. A NOTE ON 'THE PYGMY SHREW, *SUNCUS ETRUSCUS*

A Pygmy Shrew, *Suncus etruscus*, was rescued from a small tank in an open field at village Narhe, about 10 km from Pune, on 20 November 1987. It was swimming actively, and on lowering a long stick it immediately climbed out and was taken to Pune.

It was reared in an empty aquarium, 30 cm x 60 cm x 30 cm, already provided with a somewhat wet soil bed and a small tubular tunnel (burrow) about 1.5 cm in diameter, open at both ends, in one corner. The animal lived for 15 days in captivity and died, apparently from cold, on 5 December 1987.

Immediately after death, weight and measurements were noted as follows:

Sex : Male, Weight : 1.4 g, Head and Body : 4 cm,  
Tail : 3.3 cm, Height of the ear pinna : 0.4 cm.

Teeth full grown with transparent enamel revealing a portion of the pulp. Colour black-brown dorsally, whitish ash ventrally including tail. Furry coat covering all the body but tail. Ear pinnae large, moveable, with

many folds and pockets. While on the move or alerted, ear pinnae are stretched out. Side/musk/flank glands, though present, were not found to produce the foul smell which is so pronounced specially in males of the Common House Shrew *Suncus murinus*. No sound was uttered by the shrew even when disturbed or irked by soft whistling or blowing air.

In captivity it was offered a variety of food: insects, egg (raw/boiled), dry prawns etc. The shrew preferred insects, mainly cockroaches. Egg was accepted with reluctance, while the dry prawns were totally disregarded.

On becoming aware of the victim, possibly by smell, (as revealed by constant vibratile movements of the snout), the shrew would leave the burrow, walk a little distance, then quickly turn back. This was repeated several times, each foray taking it further from the burrow than the previous one. Finally it chased the victim, attacking the head first, seized and killed it. The kill was usually carried into the burrow and then consumed. The Pygmy

Shrew seems to lack the ability to dig, since termites and other insects normally found underground were left unconsumed.

I am grateful to Dr. M.S. Pradhan, Mammologist

Zoological Survey of India, Punc, for confirming identification of the specimen.

July 17, 1988.

R. V. RANADE

## 7. SIGHT RECORDS OF IBIS AND STORKS IN KERALA

During the latter part of 1986 and early 1987, there were quite a number of sightings of birds altogether new to the checklist for Kerala. There were two records each for the Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and White Ibis (*Treskionis aethiopica*), and several for the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) and the Openbill Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*), though the latter two species, of course, are not really new additions *per se*.

On 7 January 1987, I came across a solitary Black Stork at Chamravattom, about 2 km upstream River Bharathapuzha from its river mouth. Among others, many Ringed Plovers, Lesser Sandplovers, Small Indian Pratincoles, Brahminy Kites and a plethora of Pariah Kites were seen in the neighbourhood of the Black Stork, which was standing by the edge of a small inundated pool in an otherwise extensive mudflat of the riverbed.

On 24 February 1987, I was told about a new bird at the boat-landing of the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. On verification, it turned out to be yet another sight record of the Black Stork. Three Whitenecked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) siblings, which had started flying about from their nest in the neighbouring tree since about a month earlier were seen to have been feeding side by side with the Black Stork. The bird was first shown to me by an Amsterdam tourist, Mr. Jan de Groot and I subsequently had the bird photographed.

It was at Purathoor, near the Bharathapuzha estuary, that the White Ibis was seen (20 March 1987). On the extensive sandbank beside the shallow waters of the winding river was a large flock of about 160 Blackheaded Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*), and standing nearby were the four white Ibises.

Ferguson (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 16: 14*) had reported that he had come across the White Ibis only during the cold weather at Sasthamcottah in 1904. Since then there have been further sightings. When I communicated the sighting of the White Ibis to Prof. K.K. Neelakantan, the ornithologist, he said that he had seen the bird only once at Palghat in the early 1950s, soon after the Malampuzha Reservoir was filled for the first time. After that, he had not seen any except on the other side of the

Ashambu hills.

A few members of the Calicut Chapter of the Kerala Natural History Society have been subsequently able to see the White Ibis after repeated perambulation of the Bharathapuzha estuary, when they finally spotted a group of 8 White Ibises on 5 April 1987. They were said to have been able to even photograph the birds! White Stork, a very rare vagrant to Kerala\* have been repeatedly met with towards the latter part of 1986. A solitary White Stork was caught from a Minister's residence at Trivandrum City on 16 September 1986. On the 21st of the same month 3 specimens were caught from a paddy field near Neyyattinkara, out of which one was reportedly killed and consumed by the local villagers, and the rest brought to the Trivandrum Zoo.

About 27 White Ibises were found in a paddy field near Iringalakkuda on 16 December 1986 (*Pers. comm.*, V.J. Zacharias) and from the zoo authorities at Trivandrum, I gathered that they had procured a specimen of the White Stork from Kesavadasapuram in Trivandrum City three years earlier, in 1983.

In 1986 and 1987 there had been repeated sightings of the Openbill Stork, (*Anastomus oscitans*) both singly and in flocks of as many as 38 individuals, from the Kadalundy estuary and the neighbouring wetland habitats (*Pers. comm.*, Sri Namasivayan).

On 19 November 1986 the Trivandrum zoo authorities went and collected a specimen of the Openbill Stork caught by local villagers in Neyyattinkara Taluk of Trivandrum District. According to Ferguson (1904, *loc. cit* 16:15) "The Openbill Stork is very common in Travancore, where huge flocks may be met with on the marshy borders of all the large tanks and fresh water lakes, sharing the trees for roosting with flocks of darters". Since then its status seems to have altered considerably. It is found now only sparsely and in small numbers.

June 3, 1987.

D. NARAYANAKURUP

1A specimen of the White Stork was observed roosting on a coconut tree in Suheli Valiyakara, when I made a one-day survey of this uninhabited toll of the Lakshadweep Group in 1985.